



John Highkin

QUALIFICATIONS

Practical, energetic non-profit and arts professional, with 30 years experience in organizational creation and management, leadership, advocacy, and performance. Successful producer, grant writer, director, and musician, with strong emphasis on building community through art. Arts educator and lecturer in English literature and composition.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Principal, The Zimmerman Highkin Group, 2008-present

Start-up consulting services in community projects, grant-writing, education, facilitation and planning. Recent clients include Collaboration: Artists & Teachers (CoTA), San Diego, California; City of Maryville, Missouri; Peter's Rock Ministries, Salina Area Chamber of Commerce, Salina Art Center, Salina Area United Way: We Count 2010 Census Initiative, all in Salina, Kansas.

Executive Director, Salina Arts & Humanities Commission, Salina, Kansas 2004-2008

Head of City of Salina department with two divisions: Arts Programming and Smoky Hill Museum. Oversight by citizen Commission appointed by the Mayor. Worked directly with and was supervised by the City Manager. Member of the City's Executive Staff chaired by the City Manager. Worked closely with other department heads, especially Public Works, Finance, and Parks & Recreation. Spoke often before the City Commission. Major areas of responsibility:

Administration Responsible for overall departmental management, including carrying out City of Salina and departmental policies, setting of direction and programming priorities; budgeting, planning and oversight of \$1.3 million annual operating budget; personnel management of 17-person department.

Events Planning Responsible for annual Smoky Hill River Festival, founded in 1977; \$440,000 budget with 70,000 attendance over three nights and four days; worked closely with coordinating staff on booking musical and visual artists, contracting and logistics, technical issues, staffing, marketing, volunteers, and inter-departmental cooperation; responsible for policy, budgeting, and fund-raising. Department produces annual poetry reading series, performance series, and periodic one-time events.

Civic Relations Represented the department and the City of Salina in public. Chaired Cultural Roundtable group of cultural leaders, focusing on advocacy and joint marketing. Member of public transportation committee which led to new city-wide bus system in December 2008.

Cultural Assessment & Strategic Plan Management of 13-month cultural assessment; worked with facilitator Diane L. Mataraza on first departmental planning process since 1992; produced strategic plan for Salina Arts & Humanities Commission with recommendations for other cultural organizations; conducted 60 forums with 800 participants; public opinion, artist, and organizational surveys; funded by City of Salina and Salina Arts & Humanities Foundation.

Grants Programming Administered Horizons, a public/private re-granting program for organizations and individual artists; \$65,000 in grants per year; facilitated grant panels of Arts & Humanities Commissioners; oversaw policy and donor relations; provided technical assistance to applicants.

Community Art & Design City's public art program founded in 2001. Brought to completion two stalled projects; oversaw re-writing of program guidelines with City Manager; improved media and public information on projects and for the program. Member of Wayfinding Signage Committee. Member of Americans for the Arts' Public Art Network (PAN).

Arts Education Oversight of multi-disciplinary arts education program integrated into USD 305 school district's curriculum, with long- and short-term residencies.

Economic Development Collaborated on projects and planning with Salina Chamber of Commerce's Convention and Visitors Bureau (Visit Salina) and Salina Downtown, Inc., a business improvement district (BID). Engaged in civic discussions on downtown redevelopment, especially of the defunct milling district, and strategies to attract new professional artists to Salina, Kansas. Oversaw Salina's 2006-07 participation in the Americans for the Arts economic impact study, Arts & Economic Prosperity III, showing \$23.75 mil in arts and culture activity for this city of 47,000 people.

Smoky Hill Museum Worked with Museum director in setting direction and policy. As interim director, 2005-06, completed seven-year Gallery Renovation Project including three-day opening celebration. Worked closely with Friends of the Smoky Hill Museum board and organization.

Artistic Director/CEO, Fern Street Community Arts, San Diego, California 1990-2003

Co-founded single-ring theatrical circus ensemble (Fern Street Circus) emphasizing community-building through performance and education. Oversaw development from zero-based start-up to \$500,000 in annual operating income (left organization with \$45,000 cash reserve). Created and produced a critically-acclaimed show which performed across San Diego County and in Santa Rosa, Anaheim, Irvine, and Calexico, California. Built a circus scene in San Diego where none existed before. Laid groundwork for the organization to continue: now run by artists and administrators brought up from within. Major areas of responsibility included:

Administration Responsible for overall organizational management, including fund raising, budgeting, personnel, and Board development. Co-wrote and filed 501(c)(3) incorporation papers.

Artistic Direction and Production Responsible for creation of all shows and artistic presentations. Developed motifs/stories for annual show in Balboa Park (8,000 annual attendance); identified and collaborated with artists and developed acts. Created circus shows for special events (e.g., Culligan, AutoZone, Bombardier). Developed production and marketing system and oversaw technical needs for shows of varying scales. Commissioned original music; played bass in band.

Grant Writing and Fund Raising Successfully kept the organization funded for 13 years through private, corporate, and government grants, individual funding solicitations, and earned income from the Visitor Industry. Regular government grants at federal, state, county, and city levels (35% of annual income). Many corporate and foundation grants renewed annually or as often as guidelines permitted (25% of annual income). Developed and implemented distinctive individual donor solicitations (5% of income). Developed program to provide circus performers for corporate events, charity galas, street fairs, and workshops (35% of income).

Community Relations Major mission of service through education and performance. Developed annual tour to underserved neighborhoods in San Diego County and beyond. Spoke before government and civic organizations. Member of boards of community organizations.

Education Created, administered and raised funds for After-School Circus Skills Programs at city recreation centers and an inner-city middle school. Hired instructors and supervisors, oversaw curriculum development, in-service instruction, and parent relations. With Young Audiences brought school groups to annual show in Balboa Park. Created recreational brass band at city recreation center.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Grants Panelist

Kansas Arts Commission (KAC), Artists Fellowships and Awards, 2009. California Arts Council (CAC), (Artists-in-Residence Program, Multi-Residencies), 2001-03. City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture (Neighborhood Festivals), 1998-2000. City of Encinitas, California (Organizational Support), 2004

Independent Grant Writer

Clients include Media Arts Center San Diego (Latino Film Festival), 2004. Community Youth Athletic Center (youth boxing program), 2004. San Diego Bluegrass Club, 2004.

Adjunct Faculty in English

Brown Mackie College, Salina, Kansas, 2009 Composition II, general education class.

University of San Diego, 1987-99 Taught lower division composition and literature courses emphasizing a practical criticism approach in understanding texts and articulation of ideas. Coordinated Southeast San Diego Tutoring Program, providing USD student tutors for low-income private and public schools.

Artist-in-Residence

Literature of Circus class, University of San Diego, 2000.

CAC Artists-in-Community grant, 1992-93 In central city neighborhood worked at local elementary school and City rec center with puppetry, circus, and writing.

Published Writing

Includes *Intersections*, Brecht Yearbook, Vol. 21, International Brecht Society, 1997 on Brecht and music; circus and music reviews for San Diego Union-Tribune, 1989-2004.

Circus Tour Manager

Stage & Company Manager: bus-and-truck tour of Soviet Acrobatic Revue, 1989-90. Production/Stage Manager: on tour with Circus Flora, 1988.

Directing Internships

Berliner Ensemble, East Berlin, 1987. Old Globe Theatre, 1987-88. Seattle Repertory Theatre, 1989. Assistant director to prominent stage directors on productions.

Freelance Theater Director, 1983-92

Directed plays in Phoenix, Arizona (*Big River*), San Diego, California (*Conversations in Exile*, *Audience*, *Biloxi Blues*), Cambridge, England (*The Winter's Tale*, *The Measure Taken*, *Polly Honeycombe*) and Edinburgh, Scotland's Edinburgh Festival Fringe (*More Than a Fair Trial*; also author).

Freelance Musician, 1971-present

Study and performance on mandolin, upright and electric bass, and guitar. Bluegrass, country, circus music, mandolin orchestras, jazz combos, brass bands.

PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION & DEVELOPMENT

Kennedy Center arts education seminars, 2008-09 Lied Center/Salina Arts and Humanities.

San Diego Press Club, 2000 "Headliner of 1999 in the Arts," for Fern Street Circus co-founders.

Fieldstone Foundation leadership programs, 1997-2004 Participant in executive study programs: CEO Learning Group, Advanced Leadership Group, and the Coaching Network (coachee and coach).

Eureka Communities Fellow, 1997-2000 Support program for inner-city non-profit leaders.

LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) Grant, 1991 Warhol/NEA Inter-Arts Program.

SELECTED BOARD & PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**Memberships**

Association of Fundraising Professionals, 2008-present

Americans for the Arts, 2004-present

Kansas Museums Association, 2004-08

American Association of Museums, 2005-07

Boards of Directors

Salina Rotary Club, 2006-09, Member, 2004-09

Salina Child Care Association, 2005-present, Treasurer, 2008-present

San Diego Regional Arts and Culture Coalition, 1990-2003, Co-founder; chair, 1996-97

San Diego Performing Arts League, 1993-99

EDUCATION

MA in English, Churchill College, Cambridge University, England

BA in English, University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA)

SKILLS

Proficient in Macintosh and PC platforms; programs include Microsoft Office, QuickBooks, PhotoShop, InDesign, PageMaker, Finale, GarageBand, and Sound Studio.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST